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Letter dated 6 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the statement made in Geneva on 24 March 1999 by Mr. Carlos Lage Dávila, Vice-President of the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba, at the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 110.

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Annex

Statement by Mr. Carlos Lage Dávila, Vice-President of the Council of State of Cuba, in the Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, 24 March 1999

For 40 years, the Cubans have been blockaded, attacked, systematically vilified and also, more than once, criticized and condemned for the laws and measures which they have been forced to adopt in their defence.

Over the past few weeks, much has been said about the amendments to Cuba's Criminal Code and about the Act for the Protection of the National Independence and the Economy of Cuba, both adopted by the Cuban Parliament on 16 February 1999, and about the trial in which, in full compliance with the law, four unpatriotic Cubans were sentenced.

In the resulting confusion, quite a few number of news media mixed up the new penalties established for ordinary crimes in the amendments to the Criminal Code with those applicable under a different law to individuals who act in the service of an enemy which is waging war on their nation.

The changes introduced into the Criminal Code are consistent with the characteristics and circumstances of the crime situation in the world and involve the addition of three new crimes: money laundering, trafficking in persons and the sale of minors. Penalties have also been increased for those crimes and associated conducts which most seriously affect public peace, the moral and ethical values of society, and public health.

It is true that the death penalty is established in extremely serious cases for the perpetrators of some truly appalling crimes, such as using the country for international drug trafficking, and serious acts of rape or corruption of minors, since in the prevailing global circumstances Cuba deems the death penalty indispensable for deterring these repugnant conducts.

Cuba respects those who, in many parts of the world, are opposed to capital punishment, and it shares their hope that the day will come when such a penalty will not be necessary in any society. However, as a country where contempt for the law is encouraged from abroad through thousands of hours of illegal broadcasting each week, Cuba cannot, for the time being, give up capital punishment, a penalty currently applied in countries which have not been subjected to this kind of hostility and blockade.

The amendments to Cuba's Criminal Code are based on internationally recognized legal principles and are, moreover, widely supported by the Cuban people, who, accustomed to the safety brought by the revolution, demanded harsher penalties for the perpetrators of such crimes.

The Act for the Protection of the National Independence and the Economy of Cuba has, for its part, been described by those who monopolize the flow of information as a piece of legislation which infringes freedom of thought and opinion. To imagine that this is possible is tantamount to assuming that a people who are used to fighting for their ideas are submissive and abject. No one is punished in Cuba for thinking or expressing opinions.

The Act is designed to punish citizens whose acts further the goals pursued by the aggressor Power with its economic war: to destabilize the country, subvert internal order and destroy the revolution. It defines crimes of collaboration with the enemy, not crimes of opinion as some have claimed.

The intense, unscrupulous United States war has forced not only Cuba but also the European Union and States such as Argentina, Canada and Mexico to adopt legislation to protect their sovereignty and independence in the face of extraterritorial decisions taken by the United States Congress.

The new Act protects the sovereignty and rights of not only Cubans but also nationals of third countries which have been particularly affected by the pressures, repressive measures and penalties imposed against them as part of the blockade policy.

For more than a year, a media campaign orchestrated from the United States spread lies about the Cuban revolution following the arrest of four Cuban citizens, who have now been tried for the crime of incitement to sedition and sentenced to penalties ranging from three and a half to five years in prison.

Their fate would have been different had they been tried in any United States court. In that country, for just some of the crimes which they committed in Cuba, they would have been found guilty of breaching the Treasury Department's regulations for the control of Cuban assets and received sentences of up to 10 years in prison and $250,000 in fines. Simply contacting a foreign Government or agent, without attempting to subvert or plot against the Government, is punishable under the Logan Act, in force for the past 200 years, by a fine of up to $5,000 and three years in prison.

At their trial, documentary evidence and the evidence of witnesses amply demonstrated that the accused had collaborated with the enemy over a period of time, through the United States Interests Section in Havana, from which they received instructions, funds and other resources for the purpose of, *inter alia,* obstructing foreign investments by resorting to all sorts of threats, internationalizing the criminal blockade against Cuba and upsetting internal order. As any other nation would do, Cuba claims its right to punish those who place themselves at the service of a Power which is attacking their own country.

The power of the media, the interests at stake, confusion of ideas, lack of information or irresponsible behaviour tend to create a situation where an aggressor's lies are given more credence that the evidence produced by the victims. We know that there are people in the world, even friends, who, based on comparisons with what happens in their own or other countries, have questioned the fairness of the trial, which was conducted with full guarantees and respect for the human person.

However, when it comes to judging Cuba and its revolution, the fact cannot be overlooked that Cuba is not just any country. Cuba is a permanent target of the hostility of the most powerful nation in the world, which has not let up for a moment in its threats and attacks. Cuba is a country blockaded by a super-Power which forces it to be permanently on the defensive and on the alert because of its determination not to add another star to the United States flag.

No one can attack a country for 40 years, try to force its people into submission through a criminal blockade or finance the annexationist dreams and counter-revolutionary activities of isolated groups of traitors and then blame that country for defending itself.

Were it not for the Helms-Burton Act, the blockade and the economic war against Cuba, designed to shatter Cuba's internal order, destabilize the country and destroy Cuba's socialist State and independence, the Act for the Protection of the National Independence and the Economy of Cuba would not be necessary. Only by recognizing that the situation faced by Cuba is exceptional and that no nation in history has had to endure the obdurate aggression of such a powerful and voracious neighbour can the events taking place in Cuba be understood. The war being waged against Cuba by the United States and its annexationist servants is but one war. There are no watertight compartments. Psychological warfare,

bombs, sedition, propaganda: anything goes and everything is used. There may be many faces, but there is only one goal.

The Commission on Human Rights should ask itself who authorized the United States to arrogate to itself apparently for life, the role of prosecutor against Cuba. Who gave the United States the right to set itself up, also apparently for life, as supreme judge of human rights violations worldwide?

Why must we accept that, year after year, the United States Department of State, by congressional mandate, produces thick reports detailing the human rights performance of every nation except, of course, the United States itself?

How can we allow the United States to pass judgement on the world in 5,000 pages of documents?

Are we supposed to allow a nation whose unrestrained drug use encourages drug production and trafficking unilaterally to issue certificates of bad conduct to countries of drug production, distribution or transit?

Why is the United States able to show scorn for the international community by refusing to acknowledge that the General Assembly has voted time and again against the policy of blockading Cuba?

Why is the United States allowed to adopt 61 unilateral economic sanctions against a group of countries that account for 42 per cent of the world's population, without even being admonished for it?

Why is the United States opposed to expanding the Security Council and allowing countries such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa and others to become permanent members of the Council with the same prerogatives as the current members?

The United States sets itself above everything and everyone in demanding accountability for human rights violations, while its own record in that area leaves much to be desired. In the United States, the wealthiest and most powerful nation in history:

(a) Nearly 1 million people live on the streets, under bridges or in emergency shelters, while just one of its citizens has wealth totalling $80 billion;

(b) Forty-three million people, including 11 million children, have no health insurance;

(c) Millions of low-income, sick and elderly persons and single mothers have recently been excluded from welfare programmes.

In the wealthiest and most powerful nation in history:

(a) Twenty per cent of the total population are functionally illiterate;

(b) Seventeen million women have been raped or sexually assaulted and over half the female population have been victims of violence;

(c) The 45 million people living in poverty are mainly Hispanics, blacks and children. Black children are twice as likely to die in their first year of life as white children;

(d) The black population have been used for Government-sanctioned experiments that have caused premeditated damage to their health.

The wealthiest and most powerful nation in history, which attacks Cuba and asks the Commission on Human Rights to condemn it:

(a) Is the world's leading consumer of drugs;

(b) Is characterized by police brutality against blacks, Hispanics and immigrants:

(c) Has the largest prison population in the world, and its prison inmates suffer inhuman and degrading treatment;

(d) Readily imposes the death penalty, although never, or only very exceptionally, against a white citizen with pure Aryan blood. The fact is that the electric chair, the gas chamber and lethal injections are used constantly and frighteningly against blacks, Hispanics and third-world immigrants.

The wealthiest and most powerful nation in history:

(a) Is holding over 100 political prisoners in maximum-security prisons, including 15 Puerto Rican men and women imprisoned for fighting for their country's independence. This figure does not include the hundreds of thousands of people given excessively harsh sentences just because they are blacks, Hispanics, native Americans, mestizos or Hispanics who suffer discrimination and are reduced by dire poverty to committing minor misdemeanours, real or imagined;

(b) Silently allows the spread of neo-fascist and xenophobic groups that advocate all kinds of discrimination and are stepping up their acts of violence;

(c) Has created the deadliest weapons of mass destruction and is doing nothing to halt their development;

(d) Of the industrialized countries, is the lowest contributor to development assistance, and of United Nations members, is the Organization's biggest debtor.

The nation which presumes to judge the world is the nation which dropped atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, invaded Cuba at the Bay of Pigs and waged a war in Vietnam that killed almost 4 million sons and daughters of that courageous people. It is the nation which invaded the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Panama and Somalia. It is the nation which waged a dirty war in Central America, supported the region's most genocidal dictatorships and, in the schools of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), trained their bloodthirsty leaders in methods of torture. The nation which presumes to judge the world has decided to wage wars unilaterally and to launch missiles in every direction, and only afterwards to investigate any mistakes.

The blockade and the economic war are in fact genocide. The conscience of the world cannot tolerate attempts to annihilate a people through hunger and disease. Cuba has endured such attempts for 40 years. Has such a monstrous crime ever been subjected to analysis in the Commission on Human Rights?

It is very likely that in a few hours from now, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, under the aegis of the United States, will undertake brutal air strikes against Serbia, whose people were the ones who fought most heroically in Europe against the Nazi hordes during the Second World War. The use, and abuse, of force cannot solve the world's problems. Who will defend the human rights of the innocent people who will die under the missiles and bombs that fall on a small country in cultured and civilized Europe?

If the world set itself up as a court, the United States would be unable to leave the dock for centuries to come.

The United States Government, which portrays itself as a champion of human rights, is aware of the existence on its territory of terrorist organizations which act against Cuba. It has ties to them and benefits from their money.

Recently, at two trials in Havana, documentary evidence and the evidence of witnesses demonstrated irrefutably that leaders of the well-known Cuban-American National

Foundation, together with Luis Posada Carriles, a criminal in its pay, took part in terrorist attacks and other actions against Cuba and that they have ties to United States institutions and authorities. It will be recalled that it was Luis Posada Carriles, currently based in El Salvador, and Orlando Bosch, based in Florida, neither of whom have served their sentences, who sabotaged a Cubana airliner in mid-flight in October 1976, killing 73 people.

Hired by well-known counter-revolutionaries of Cuban origin with proven ties to both the CIA and the Cuban-American National Foundation, two Salvadoran nationals were tried for planting several explosive devices in hotels in Havana, one of which killed a young Italian tourist and injured Cubans and foreigners. The aim was to damage Cuba's growing tourist industry. They also planned to plant bombs in places sacred to Cuba's history, including the tomb where the remains of Ernesto Guevara have been laid to rest. The CIA murdered Che Guevara, but it could not kill his ideas. They buried him, and others who fell with him, in unmarked graves, but humankind rescued almost all of them from their scattered tombs. Now, they were planning to blow up his remains.

The Cuban Government realizes that these trials and the denunciations made at them received little news coverage and insufficient international publicity.

That is why it must be reiterated here that the Cuban-American National Foundation, an organization registered in the United States as "non-profit, philanthropic and educational", is in fact a terrorist mafia whose large fortune, of highly dubious origin, was amassed through fraud, embezzlement, privileges and Government support, and that it has bankrolled costly political campaigns to help elect mayors, representatives and even senators and Presidents in the United States.

That organization, which contributes funds to both the Republican and the Democratic parties, lobbies, promotes and secures the passage of genocidal laws against Cuba, brings together and supports the most vicious CIA-trained terrorists, hatches and bankrolls plots to attack and murder Cuban leaders, and plans and commits crimes against workers and tourists. There is no project for aggression and military intervention against Cuba that it has not supported. That is its real history.

The terrorist groups acting from the United States to overthrow the Cuban revolution find shelter in that country's growing hostility towards Cuba. Since 1992, more than 21 laws, including the Helms-Burton and Torricelli Acts, have been passed in the United States; warning letters have been sent and entry visas denied to foreign businessmen with investments in Cuba, as a means of intimidating them; companies trading with Cuba have been blacklisted; and licences to operate flights to Cuba and exhibit medical equipment and medicines there have been denied. Criminal proceedings have been brought, threats made and fines imposed against United States firms and citizens for their relations with Cuba, and permission has even been refused for donations of medicines.

Can a country stand idly by while its neighbour passes one law after another and imposes one measure after another in an attempt to recolonize it?

Incredibly enough, despite the developments described above, there is talk of a relaxation of United States policy towards Cuba, intended to stem the growing tide of public opposition to the blockade both within and outside the United States, cripple the increasingly powerful Cuba solidarity movement, strip away the patriotic content of Cuba's resistance and deceive those who want, or whom it suits, to be deceived.

That was the intent of the measures announced by President William Clinton on 5 January 1999, which many press agencies, Governments and personalities, consciously or otherwise, hailed as a gesture towards easing the blockade.

Since the United States President has no executive power on this issue, having relinquished it, the White House spokesman was quick to explain that these measures did not represent a change of policy towards Cuba, and the Secretary of State hastily corroborated his explanation.

It should be recalled that, several months previously, in March 1998, the United States Government had announced another set of measures which were also clearly deceptive.

The alleged easing of restrictions is simply a vehicle for the Government's plans to finance and support its agents on the island and to try and subvert Cuba's internal order. They have not sold a single aspirin in Cuba, Western Union has not been able to open the office in Havana through which it planned to channel family remittances, the sending of such remittances is subject to restrictions, citizens of Cuban origin have not found it any easier to travel to Cuba and even telephone calls between the two countries are being obstructed.

With the cold war over and the United States enjoying absolute hegemony, many in the world look at this failed and ridiculous criminal policy and wonder why that country does not abandon its obstinate policy once and for all, and turn over this sordid page in history.

The real reason is the corruption of the United States political system, that same system which it wants to impose on Cuba as a model, and the prevalence of shady political interests over the basic ethical principles which politics in a country which sets itself up as an example should not renounce under any circumstances.

The equation is simple: in order to get elected or re-elected, congressional hopefuls and members of Congress are forced to raise vast sums of money to finance their campaigns. On average, a Senate race in the United States costs at least $3 million. Where does the money come from? All kinds of businesses and organizations. Some, like the Cuban-American National Foundation, will later, in the manner of Mafia godfathers, demand a vote for a bill or an amendment, the signing of another, condemnation of the inconceivable, tolerance towards organizing and training for terrorist action, or that a show be put on for international agencies. Tit for tat, as in children's games. That is the usual procedure, except for some notable exceptions where a person's prestige enables him to overcome such obstacles or where he has sufficient private resources to finance his own campaign.

Otherwise, what are we to think of the article published in the United States newspaper *El Nuevo Herald* on 5 March 1999, under the headline "Foundation meets with Clinton", reporting on a political fund-raiser for Democratic Senator Robert Torricelli of New Jersey? What are we to make of this meeting between the President of the United States and leaders of the Cuban-American National Foundation, when no one knows better than United States officials and institutions who the Foundation's leaders are and what they do? What are the Cuban people supposed to think of a President with friends like these?

Is no one going to condemn these actions and this complicity? At times, it seems as if condemnation of United Nations Member States is reserved for — and only tolerated for — underdeveloped countries.

There are many more falsehoods which could be denied and injustices which could be denounced in this room, which has witnessed a succession of outrageous vendettas against Cuba, based on a politicized, selective manipulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which the powerful winners of the cold war have sought to use to subjugate the Cuban people and undermine their sovereignty and independence.

A paralytic invented by United States propaganda once stepped lightly through the corridors of this very building, a man to whom they also gave the title of poet and ambassador. His muse was the only thing that never left his wheelchair.

Those who know something of the history of the Cuban revolution know that, since the days of the war of liberation, Cuba has never lied.

Truth has always been the main weapon of the revolution. With it, Cuba has won the respect even of its enemies. Thanks to it, Cuba is here in this Commission. Truth has gradually weakened the United States entrenched position, with the result that, in 1998, after seven years, 19 member States of the Commission voted against the resolution condemning Cuba.

We knew that the battle was not over, however, and that the United States would continue to put pressure on other States in order to renew its shameful campaign against Cuba.

The United States looked for, and found, a convenient intermediary to embrace its immoral objectives and take the blame for the consequences, whether an embarrassing defeat or a pyrrhic victory. The Cuban Government is not surprised at the choice that was made: there will always be someone who, in the search for some small benefit, will lend himself to any vile deed, forgetting that, in some chance alliances, such action may have unforeseen costs.

Many representatives in the Commission on Human Rights will find it difficult to vote for a resolution condemning Cuba, because they are aware of what has been done in Cuba to promote all the human rights of the Cuban people, because they know that it is disgraceful to accuse Cuba of violating those rights, and because examples abound of how, despite its lack of material wealth and even despite its present difficulties and shortages, it has shown solidarity with others.

Cuba is accused of violating human rights in a resolution that is as guilty of manipulation as its predecessors.

Despite living under a blockade and under siege and with far fewer resources than others:

Where in Cuba are the illiterates, the children without schools and the teachers without classrooms?

Where is there a single citizen without health care coverage?

Where are the disabled persons without opportunities to study and work?

Where in Cuba can you find a retired person without a pension or an elderly person without protection?

Where are the women who are paid less than men for the same work?

Where is the racial discrimination or xenophobia?

Where in Cuba are the workers fired without safeguards or protection?

Where is there a single compatriot left to fend for himself?

Where can you find, throughout the length and breadth of Cuba, a case of anyone who has been tortured, murdered or disappeared?

Where in Cuba are the death squads and extrajudicial executions?

A people like the Cuban people, who have been educated in the principles of the revolution and in the ethics and morality of the revolution, can come here with their heads held high and their consciences clear.

The Cuban people are well aware that the revolution ushered in, for the first time in the country's history, genuine enjoyment of the broadest possible freedoms.

Cuba has enabled its citizens to enjoy real participation in affairs of state and in key decision-making.

Workers, peasants, intellectuals, young people, students, women, neighbours and even children have been organized into their own associations, which represent their specific interests with complete independence and join in the common effort.

Cuba is not ashamed of its press which, although small, is uncorrupted and safe from petty scheming.

Elections in Cuba are transparent. Candidates are nominated by the people and 98 per cent of the electorate go to the ballot boxes, which are guarded by children. There is not even a hint of fraud and the ballot count is public.

It is true that there is only one party, but that party does not nominate candidates or choose the first places on the lists or elect members of parliament ahead of time. In Cuba, it is the people, from the grass-roots up, who nominate and elect their representatives. The people prefer a party which unites them to fragmentation and divisiveness. But just as Cuba respects the system which each nation has chosen for itself, so it demands respect for its own. The United States does not condemn or persecute allied countries that have no parties or democracy.

Just because Cuba is not understood does not mean that it should sell itself. Remember that, centuries ago, the Church finally acknowledged that Galileo was right.

Cuba's commitment to human rights transcends its own borders. Without charging a penny and with no thought for their own interest:

(a) More than 25,000 Cuban doctors have carried out internationalist missions in the most far-flung places and more than 14,000 child victims of the Chernobyl disaster have received medical care in Cuba;

(b) Thousands of Cuban teachers have taken their knowledge to other countries and more than 41,000 adolescents and young people from 120 countries around the world have studied or are studying in Cuba. After the brutal massacre at Kasinga in Namibia, surviving orphaned children and young people found a home and a school in Cuba. Many of them are today outstanding, prominent professionals in their own country;

(c) While others traded with and even supported the racist regime in South Africa, Cubans shed their blood to help secure the independence of Angola and Namibia and, with the Angolans, the Namibians and the combatants of the African National Congress, to deal a crushing blow to the ignominious apartheid regime, a blow from which it never recovered. Cuba has no oil, diamonds, businesses, factories or anything else in Africa, nor did it ever aspire to any in exchange for its generous sacrifice.

How many of those who presume to judge Cuba can say the same?

Hundreds of doctors and health care personnel were sent to the remotest, most inhospitable areas devastated by the forces of nature in Central America, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and thousands have been offered to these and other countries in the region and in Africa which suffer the permanent hurricane of poverty, underdevelopment

and lack of health care that is killing millions of children and adults in the world. We have been doing this throughout the 40 years of the revolution.

Cuba currently offers 1,000 scholarships a year to Latin American students to train them as medical professionals, and all the scholarships necessary for Caribbean students to pursue university studies in any field.

Effective health programmes have been undertaken in Haiti and, more recently, the Niger, two of the countries with the worst health indicators in the world. Each of these countries has been offered no fewer than 500 doctors or as many as are needed to save 100,000 lives a year, including over 60,000 children.

That all these services are offered at absolutely no cost, contributing the valuable human assets created by the revolution, is irrefutable proof that even with a blockade and an economic war, a lot can be achieved with very little.

The wealthy industrialized countries are expected to provide only a minimum of essential medicines. Many non-governmental organizations are already doing so.

Human rights are not defended by granting surpluses with strings attached but by sharing unconditionally what one has and what is needed.

For Cuba, human rights mean something more than the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration.

Human rights mean social justice, genuine equality and a fair distribution of wealth.

The time of the Commission on Human Rights and of other agencies of the United Nations system should not be wasted by those who accuse Cuba out of resentment; rather, it should be used to find solutions to the tremendous problems facing the world.

Let the Commission of Human Rights discuss and find solutions for the 60 per cent of the world's population who are poor and for the 25 per cent who are living in extreme poverty, for the 800 million who are hungry and for the 2 billion who are suffering from nutritional anaemia.

Let the Commission on Human Rights consider the 30 million Africans who are suffering from acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and have no access to medication.

The question should be asked whether it is fair to collect the debt owed by the countries where these people live, which in many cases accounts for more than half of their limited revenues, while in the United States alone, $8 billion are spent on cosmetics, in the rich countries, $17 billion are spent on pet food and, worldwide, $400 billion are spent on narcotic drugs.

Each year, almost $800 billion are invested worldwide to manufacture weapons, more than $300 billion of that amount in the United States, while every 24 hours, 68,000 more people become beggars and 25,000 children die of curable diseases.

Twenty per cent of the world's population, most of them living in developed countries, account for 86 per cent of total expenditure on consumer goods. The 225 wealthiest people in the world have fortunes amounting to the annual income of 2.5 billion human beings. The three richest people in the world have assets totalling more than the gross domestic product of the 48 least developed countries.

Deforestation is concentrated in poor countries, but more than half the world's timber and three quarters of the world's paper are used in the rich countries. The plundering of fish stocks has depleted many marine species and raised their prices, making fish inaccessible to the poor. Emissions from developed countries pollute the atmosphere, to the detriment

of the environment which belongs to everyone, while the country responsible for 25 per cent of those emissions refuses to reduce them.

While the gap between rich and poor countries widens, thousands of Central Americans are being deported from the United States, even though their countries have been devastated by a hurricane. Meanwhile, walls are being built, such as the one along the United States border with Mexico, where the number of Latin Americans who die each year is higher than the total number of people who died at the Berlin Wall.

The reason for the resolution against Cuba that has been circulated in the Commission on Human Rights is not alleged violations of human rights or the trial and sentencing of unpatriotic citizens and terrorists or the laws in defence of Cuban independence.

The reason is the pathological obduracy of the United States towards Cuba, which dates back to the first half of the nineteenth century, for even then the annexation of Cuba was a cherished objective of that country's expansionist plans.

The reason is the impotence of a powerful neighbour that has been unable to take over Cuba, as it did Puerto Rico and more than half of Mexico, much less destroy Cuba's heroic, exemplary revolution of 1959, not even after the demise of the Soviet Union and the socialist community.

The reason is the reaction of the United States to world opposition in the General Assembly, where, for the past seven years, the blockade against Cuba has met with increasingly overwhelming condemnation.

One of the weapons most often used by the United States against the Cuban revolution has been the lies carefully fed to the world. It has even been claimed that the Cuban Government engages in drug trafficking and that Fidel Castro has one of the largest fortunes in the world. What can be said is that Cuba is possibly the country in the world least affected by drugs, that its Government is a thousand light years away from the corruption that is spreading today as an uncontrollable consequence of neo-liberalism and that its President is one of this century's most honest and most extraordinary political leaders, one who has dedicated his life to his people and to all the peoples of the world with as much passion and determination as austerity and personal integrity.

The socialism which Cuba defends is sustained by morality. The Cuban people know that those in positions of responsibility in the country do not have private business interests, they work for a living. They know that workers in some State production sectors may earn as much as twice what a Minister earns. Those in positions of responsibility are not fighting to protect their personal property but to defend their ideas. There will be no inheritances or privileges for their children, only examples.

The slander and lies may continue and the Cubans will respond, as they so often do, by quoting Martí: "A just principle, from the depths of a cave, can do more than an army".

No nation should be condemned for defending its independence.

The globalized world in which we live today cannot develop on the basis of one way of thinking and one hegemonic Power.

Cuba is struggling, and will continue to struggle, for a just world.